Letter from Taizé

Bimonthly 3.50 FF 4 August - September 1993

Page 3
Practical information

PROCESSED
JUL 12 1993
GTU LIBRARY

Taizé
European Meeting of Young Adults
28 December 1993 - 1 January 1994
Munich

From December 28th, 1993 to January 1st, 1994

The next European Meeting of Young Adults will be held in Munich

During the Pentecost meetings in Taizé, young people from different parts of Germany expressed the meaning in their eyes of hosting such a gathering in their country today:

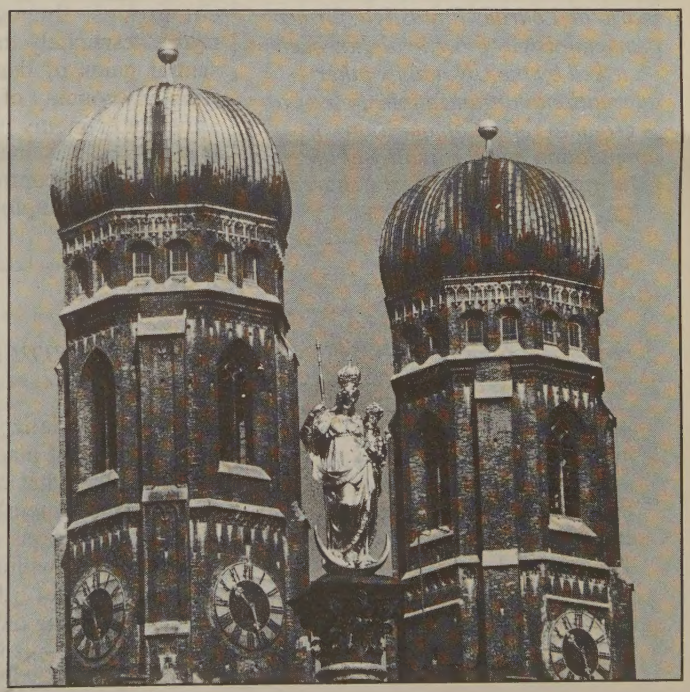
"It's the right moment for a European meeting in Germany. The great majority of Germans are against the hatred of foreigners; many are ready to welcome strangers, to open their homes. They know that it will bring them something more. Only a small minority thinks otherwise; they base their thinking on disappointment, on discouragement, on the defense of their self-interest. And some, through criminal acts, express in front of the whole world their rejection of foreigners. It is hard to come up with visible gestures against this hatred. The European meeting will be one of these signs. It will be an encouragement for many."

"In our situation in Germany, the European meeting will be an opportunity to understand that every person is important. Many young people here think that they are less worthwhile than others, and because of that they are aggressive. For instance, some think that foreigners are granted privileges. That is what I saw during previous European meetings, that no one is privileged: for five days everyone lives very simply, eats the same food, sleeps in the same conditions; no one is favoured and no one is excluded."

"The life of our parishes is often frozen stiff; it's hard to get things to move. People are too concerned about questions of structure. I am happy about the breath of new life that young people from all over will bring us. It will certainly not be easy to convince families to offer hospitality, but I know that many people now have the desire to find a way out of a material life-style; they have a longing for unity."

"Because it will take place in Germany, the European meeting will be a sign of hope in the current situation in Europe. Here East and West meet and confront each other concretely. We have become painfully aware that the walls inside our heads are the hardest ones to bring down. The meeting can show that a communion in the faith links us to one another and to every nation; it is a solid link that we can count on and that goes beyond the particular characteristics of each nation. The common prayers all together and those in the parishes will play the most important role."

The cathedral, in the city-centre



Building a world of solidarity in a time of transition

Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, former prime minister of Portugal, has been asked by the UN and by other international organizations to lead a group to reflect on questions of population and the quality of life. During a stay in Taizé, she shared these reflections:

The 1990's are characterized by worry, doubt and the disappearance of the models that served for decades as reference points. If you look at the map of the world, you can see several great problems:

Immense problems

Africa has become an outsider in the world economic process. The great powers have lost interest in Africa's fate, and the Western world seems discouraged in the face of the immense problems of that continent.

In Latin America, despite the restoration of democracy, the cycles of electoral politics do not coincide with the time necessary to achieve an economic and social recovery, and above all to deal with the dire poverty from which more than half of the population of some countries is suffering.

In Asia, countries inhabited by an enormous mass of poor people coexist with a few countries that have followed the Japanese model in an accelerated way. The process of delocalization of transnational corporations has had a beneficial effect on the macro-economy of some countries of East—and now Southeast—Asia. But this has been at the cost of a huge exploitation of cheap labour.

In central and eastern Europe and in Russia, the desire for freedom was accompanied by the desire for a society where basic consumer needs would be satisfied. But democracy sometimes seems to have become nothing more than struggles for power between different groups; the current leaders are trying desperately to hold on to the essential gains of democracy. Changing from an economy of central planning to a market economy is a difficult process that no one has mastered. The rest of Europe is also confronted by problems, among which employment is one of the most striking.

A long-term undertaking

In the industrialized countries, gradually the accent placed on employment has shifted to what can be called an "active society," where there is a great variety of occupations and forms of work and a diversity within each activity. The uniform model of employment—a standard working day, the same amount of hours for all—is becoming more and more outmoded, the vestige of a previous stage of industrialization. In this context, there is a need for sharing: the sharing of money as well as time and abilities. This will make it possible for those who are doing too much to have a more balanced life, where there is room for other activities besides professional ones, and where doubtlessly the concern for others and for God will be able to find new forms of expression.

This need for sharing is not primarily moral; it comes from the necessity for a new equilibrium in the economy itself. There will be consequences in the organization of urban life, in trade, and we will find what can be called a new example for ourselves. This may also have consequences for the other continents. It is a long-term undertaking.

For the less developed countries, the current opinion is that development as it has been viewed in the past, while it does enable a country to modernize itself and to be a part of the cut-throat competition of the international marketplace, will never solve the problem of poverty. These countries will need both to work for a modernization that will allow them to take part in international trade and thus to acquire hard currency, and to discover specific strategies to deal with poverty.

The importance of interdependency

In the face of nationalism, young people can help societies not to be afraid of being themselves. Until the breakup of communism, wherever there was a latent conflict people turned for protection to the great nuclear powers of the USA and the USSR. That day is past. Societies need to reach maturity, a capacity to solve their own problems. The contradiction between a totally interdependent world and a world where nationalisms are reborn can only be solved by those with an experience of the importance of interdependency with other cultures.

It is good that everywhere, young people are influencing this transformation necessary to create a more human society and theyare discussing it in groups. The youth of today has new advantages. What are they?

The first one is this: the sources of young people's knowledge are not limited to the four walls of a school. Knowledge comes to them from everywhere, from a host of experiences. Each young person has to sort out and synthesize all this information.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Dates: Arrive Tuesday morning, 28th December 1993 between 7am and 12 noon. Depart Saturday 1st January 1994.

General Programme: We will be welcomed by families and local church communities throughout the city. All participants must be motivated to take part in the daily rhythm of prayers, meetings and small groups. In each neighbourhood there will be a morning prayer, then meetings in small groups and visits to people with an involvement in the local area. Each day there will be two common prayers for everyone in the city-centre; in the afternoon, workshops on different themes.

Accommodation: Simple conditions. Bring sleeping-bag and lightweight mattress. Groups should not arrange their own accommodation in advance as this detracts from the element of sharing.

18 to 29 year olds: three different ways of taking part: - the main group: participation in the life of the parishes of the city, - the silence group (has its own separate accommodation), - helping with practical work for the meeting, or animation, or music for the common prayers, while still participating in the life of the parishes, (to do this, arrive, if possible, on December 26th between 8am and 3pm. It is not possible to arrive on Dec. 27th.

16 to 18 year olds can only take part if accompanied by a group leader over 20 who stays with them, so they can be divided into small groups of 7 (girls and boys separate) and all participate in the main group (see above) from 28th December onwards (do not arrive before).

Adults over 30 all participate in the main group (see above) from 28th December onwards (do not arrive before). Those who cannot stay in the same simple conditions as the young people and need a 'real bed' indicate this on their registration form. Those who are accompanying a group of young people are welcome to stay with them if they will accept the same simple accommodation.

Families with children, and people with a disability who need special accommodation should register directly to Taizé — best by telephone in October or November — to arrange suitable accommodation.

Your contribution to costs covers all meals during the meeting and a public transport pass. An estimate of the contribution expected from each participant will be given in the next edition of the Letter from Taizé.

Travel:

1. — from Britain: Coach departing from London. Contact: Nuneaton Coaches, Whitacre Road, NUNEATON, CV11 6BN. Tel: (0203) 325682 Fax: (0203) 375875. 2. — from other countries: write to Taizé for information. 3. — To arrive on December 26th to help: Travel with a coach leaving Taizé on Dec. 25th (contact Taizé).

Send in your registration form by 1st December at the latest. Further information will be sent in November to those who have already registered.

- Those who live in Britain send their forms to a contact person. - Only the following should register directly to Taizé: families with children; those with special accommodation needs; anyone living outside of Britain. Address: European Meeting, F-71250 Taizé Community. Tel: 85.50.30.02 Fax: 85.50.30.16.

Taizé

European Meeting of Young Adults

28 December 1993 - 1 January 1994

Munich

Registration Form

Send in by December 1st either to a contact person (Britain) or (if you live outside Britain) to Taizé. Send to: European meeting, F-71250 TAIZÉ-COMMUNAUTÉ, Tel. (+33) 85 50 30 02 (9 - 11am and 1.30 - 5.30pm), Fax (+33) 85 50 30 16.

First Name:

Family Name:

Address:

(with postcode and country)

Tel.: ...../..... Occupation: ..... Age: .....

(Circle "Yes" or "No" or complete where necessary)

- I am coming with a group from the town of .....

led by .....

- For adults (over 30 years) and those who cannot sleep on the floor:

I need a bed: yes / no if "yes", say whether you are (please circle):

woman man couple family with ... children disabled person with helper

- I will arrive on 28th December: yes / no (arrival time between 7am and 12pm)

- I will arrive on 26th December (17-30 year olds only): yes / no

to help with (please circle): animation / work / music team.

- N.B. If, for any reason, you are arranging your own accommodation please send us the address where you will be staying.

- I would like ..... more registration forms (photocopy your own if possible)

Faith without the Shadow of Fear

Matthew 11,25-30

When Jesus taught, people understood him. He was happy about this, but others were suspicious that the mystery of God had become so easily accessible to newcomers. They made fun of those who listened to Jesus, calling them "little children." This word was used for infants who could not yet speak as well as for naive adults.

The disdain shown to the disciples also reflected back on Jesus. Already people had concluded from the fact that he liked to eat with "tax collectors and sinners" that he was "a glutton and a drunkard" (v. 19). Now, if his listeners are a crowd of simple-minded folk, that must be because their teacher does not have what it takes to convince the intelligent. One day, one of Jesus' opponents said about those who took his words to heart: "This mob that knows nothing of the Law—there is a curse on them" (John 7,49).

If someone has a message, he would like to reach the most talented, to enter into a dialogue with the thinkers of his time ("the wise and learned"). And in fact, the Gospels show us Jesus arguing with the teachers of the Law. He tried to win over people like Nicodemus, who was a member of the most educated group in Jerusalem. His failure to reach the influential circles upon which the survival of a movement or an idea usually depends could have discouraged Jesus.

But instead, he rejoices! In his prayer, far from complaining, he gives thanks. What is this joy of his? It is not the malicious pleasure of the demagogue who gets revenge on the intellectuals by realizing that he is more popular than they are. Jesus rejoices because God is accessible to all, even to the littlest. The large following he finds among the crowds reveals that God loves each person, that God "gives generously to all without finding fault" (James 1,5).

Before Christ, small closed circles of people with a special knowledge of God may have existed. But now, the large number of people, small and great, who listen to Jesus with joy and who understand him show that God's love is without limit. Jesus was severe only with those who spoke about God in such a complicated way that it seemed that he was meant only for a privileged few; and he forbade his disciples to let themselves be called "Teacher" (Matt 23,8). In Christ the prophetic promise is fulfilled: "They will no longer need to teach one another, saying: "Know the Lord!" Because they will all know me, from the least to the greatest" (Jer 31,34).

Jesus was criticized for winning the people's favour by over-simplifying his message. By saying, "All things have been entrusted to me by my Father" (v. 27), he replies to this accusation. It would indeed be a serious matter only to accept what is easy in God's Law and to reject anything in the Mystery that is beyond human comprehension. But Jesus lets us see that between him and God an absolute community of goods exists. There is nothing in God that is not found in him, the Christ. Just as it goes without saying that a father and a son know each other, Jesus is naturally in communication with God. His simplicity does not come from overlooking or leaving out mysteries that are too difficult, but from an overabundant familiarity with God. He came from God to purify faith of all remnants of fear. He said, and he is the only one able to say it: "Don't be afraid. What you see in me is enough. There is no hidden and frightening face of God. Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father."

It is love, the continual activity of the Holy Spirit within us, which truly banishes fear.

Nevertheless, no affirmation about God can, by itself, eliminate for good from the trusting of faith those attacks of anxiety that come from heaven knows where. Only an activity, the act of loving, can "drive out fear" (1 John 4,18). Jesus said, "Come to me and take my yoke upon yourself" (v. 29). That is an invitation to keep his commandments, because expressions like "yoke" or "bearing burdens" were customary at the time to speak about the Law and ways of fulfilling it, often painstaking ones. In opposition to those who explained the commandments in ways that "tied up heavy loads and put them on people's shoulders" (Matt 23,4), Jesus said, "My burden is easy, my yoke comfortable." All can keep his commandments; "they are not burdensome" (1 John 5,4).

But in reality, does not Christ ask us to do the most difficult thing in the world, to love our enemies, to love without expecting anything in return? What is comfortable or easy about the struggle to forgive those who mistreat us? Here, the intelligence of the clever comes up short. Once again, it is "little children" who will grasp a Gospel secret that remains hidden from those who try to be self-sufficient: what God asks, he gives. "I will place my Spirit within you and I will enable you to keep my decrees" (Ezek 36,27). It is love, the constant activity of the Spirit within us, that casts out fear. But that love takes root only in a humble heart that has entrusted to God all worry about what will become of it, a heart so poor that it has no other choice than to let God accomplish within it what is good.

MEDITATING ON THE WORD
SEPTEMBER

These short readings, taken from the midday prayer in Taizé, can be read several times during the day. The references indicate longer readings. If you have time to read only one, the one in bold type is suggested.

1 **Jn 14.22-27** 1 Tm 3.14-16
WED Jesus said: Peace I leave you; my peace I give you. I do not give it to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.

2 1 Tm 4.7-11 **Jn 15.1-8**
THU St. Paul writes: Train yourself to live in godliness: it holds out promise both for the present life and the life to come.

3 **Jn 15.9-13** 1 Tm 4.12-16
FRI Jesus said: This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you.

4 1 Tm 6.11-12 **Jn 15.14-17**
SAT Paul writes to Timothy: Fight the good fight of faith and win the eternal life to which you were called.

5 **Mt 18.15-20** Rm 13.8-10
SUN Jesus said: When two or three meet in my name, I am there among them.

6 Pr 3.3-7 **Lk 4.14-22**
MON Trust in God with all your heart and do not rely upon your own understanding.

7 **Pr 4.18-27** Lk 4.31-37
TUE Above all else, watch over your heart, for it is the well-spring of life.

8 Rm 8.28-30 **Mt 1.18-23**
WED In all things God works for the good of those who love him, those who have been called according to his purpose.

9 **Pr 16.9,19-20** Lk 4.38-41
THU Happy the one who is attentive to the Word and who trusts in the Lord.

10 **Pr 23.17-18** Lk 4.42-44
FRI Let your heart remain constant in the adoration of God; for there is a future and your hope will not come to nothing.

11 Na 1.7-8 **Lk 5.1-11**
SAT The Lord is better than a fortress in time of trouble. He recognizes those who trust in him, even when the flood rushes on.

12 Si 27.30-28.7 **Mt 18.21-22**
SUN Forgive your neighbour any wrongs done to you, and when you pray your sins will be forgiven.

13 Lk 5.12-16 **Ph 1.3-6**
MON A leper implored Jesus, saying, "Lord, if you are willing, you can cure me." Jesus streched out his hand, touched him and said, "I am willing. Be healed!"

14 **Jn 3.13-21** Ph 2.6-11
TUE Everyone who believes in Christ will have eternal life.

15 **2 Tm 2.10-12a** Lk 5.17-26
WED St. Paul writes: If we have died with Christ, then we shall also live with him.

16 **Ph 1.7-11** Lk 5.33-39
THU Paul writes: I pray that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best.

17 Lk 6.6-11 **Ph 1.20-26**
FRI Jesus said to the man with a withered hand, "Stretch out your hand." The man did so, and his hand was restored.

18 **Ph 2.1-4** Lk 6.12-19
SAT Paul writes: Be one in love, one in heart and one in mind; do nothing out of jealousy or vanity.

19 Is 55.6-9 **Mt 20.1-16**
SUN Seek the Lord while he is near. Turn to our God, he pardons freely.

20 **Lk 6.20-23** Ph 2.12-18
MON Looking at his disciples, Jesus said: Happy are you who are poor, the kingdom of God is yours.

21 **Mt 9.9-13** Ep 4.1-6
TUE St MATTHEW As he walked, Jesus saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, "Follow me". And he got up and followed him.

22 **Lk 6.27-35** Ph 3.8-11
WED Jesus said: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

23 **Ph 3.12-16** Lk 6.36-38
THU Paul writes: I do not consider that I have already made it, but forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal.

24 **Ph 3.17-4.1** Lk 6.39-42
FRI Paul writes: Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transfigure our lowly bodies into the likeness of his glorious body.

25 **Ph 4.4-7** Lk 6.46-49
SAT Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say, rejoice!

26 **Mt 21.28-32** Ezk 18.25-28
SUN Jesus said: A father said to his two sons, "Go and work in the vineyard today." The first replied, "I will not," but afterwards thought better of it and went. The second replied, "Certainly, sir," but did not go. Which of the two did the father's will? Those listening said, "The first."

27 **Lk 7.1-10** Ws 1.1-3
MON A centurion said to Jesus: Say the word, and my servant will be healed.

28 **Ws 1.7-15,2.23** Lk 7.11-17
TUE The Spirit of the Lord fills the world: it holds all things together and knows every word said.

29 Dn 7.13-14 **Jn 1.47-51**
WED Daniel said: In a vision I saw one like a son of man, to whom were given authority, glory and sovereign power, and all the nations and peoples of every tongue worshipped him. His kingdom is everlasting, it will never pass away.

30 Ws 7.7-10 **Lk 7.18-23**
THU God's wisdom have I loved more than health or beauty — even preferring her to the light, for her radiance will never cease.

JOHANNINE HOURS

JOHN 10,3-4

Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

"The sheep listen to his voice. He calls them by name and leads them out... They follow him because they know his voice" (John 10.3-4).

This is one of the most astonishing statements in the Gospel: we know the voice of Christ. It is not the voice of a stranger. In order to know him, Jesus did not send people to study obscure manuscripts. He assures us that his voice is familiar to all, to the simple as well as to the most cultivated. And he adds: "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10,10).

Yes, we recognize his voice by this sign: it offers life. If we dare to believe in life, that is because he is speaking to us. And if something in us is awakened to respond to him, that is because we have been created for this life, meant already, before our birth, to hear this voice that communicates it.

We know his voice. He knows us. "I know my sheep. My sheep know me. I give my life for my sheep." He does not know us as one knows an object, but as those for whom one gives one's life.

We are linked to Christ by this "mystery", this plan of God to clothe us in eternal life. Christ came to turn this plan into reality. "It is the will of the one who sent me that I lose nothing of what he has given me, but that I raise it up" (John 6,39).

- In what way can we live out the mystery of the resurrection in our life on earth?
- God's call is always a call to greater life. How can this conviction help us to discern which choices we must make?

MEDITATING ON THE WORD
OCTOBER

These short readings, taken from the midday prayer in Taizé, can be read several times during the day. The references indicate longer readings. If you have time to read only one, the one in bold type is suggested.

1 FRI Ws 7.21-26 Lk 7.24-28 God's wisdom is a reflection of the eternal light, an untarnished mirror of his active power and image of his goodness.

2 SAT Ws 9.13-18 Lk 7.36-50 Who could ever have known your will, Lord, had you not given Wisdom and sent your Holy Spirit from above? Thus the paths of those on earth have been straightened and people have been taught what pleases you.

3 SUN Mt 21.33-42 Ph 4.6-9 Jesus said: Have you never read in the scriptures: "The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone; this is the Lord's doing and we marvel at it"?

4 MON Mt 11.25-30 Ga 6.14-18 Jesus said: I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for having revealed to little children what you have hidden from the learned and clever.

5 TUE Rm 1.8-17 Lk 8.4-8 Paul writes: The Gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who has faith.

6 WED Lk 8.11-15 Rm 5.1-5 Jesus said: The seed is the word of God. The seed that falls on good soil, this is people who live according to the word and yield a rich harvest because they persevere.

7 THU Rm 5.6-11 Lk 8.19-21 While we were still powerless, at the time chosen by God, Christ died for those who were without God.

8 FRI Rm 6.4-6 Lk 8.22-25 Buried with Christ in baptism, we live a new life with him.

9 SAT Rm 6.12-23 Lk 8.43-48 Now you are set free from sin and in the service of God, you will gain the holiness that leads to eternal life.

10 SUN Is 25.6-9 Mt 22.1-10 The Lord has destroyed the veil of mourning that enfolded all peoples. He has swallowed up death forever.

11 MON Rm 7.4-6 Lk 8.49-56 Paul writes: Now we are released from the Law, having died to what was binding us, and so we are in a new service, that of the Spirit, and not in the old service of a written code.

12 TUE Rm 8.1-4 Lk 9.1-6 Paul writes: The law of the Spirit, which gives life in Christ Jesus, has set you free from the law of sin and death.

13 WED Rm 8.5-11 Lk 9.10-17 The Spirit seeks life and peace.

14 THU Lk 9.18-22 Rm 8.14-17 Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "The Christ of God."

15 FRI Lk 9.23-24 Rm 8.18-25 Jesus said: Whoever wants to be a follower of mine must renounce themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

16 SAT Rm 8.26-30 Lk 9.28-36 We do not know how to pray properly, but the Spirit comes to help us in our weakness and intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

17 SUN Is 45.1-6 Mt 22.15-21 The Lord says: Though you did not know me, I have called you by your name.

18 MON Lk 10.1-9 2 Tm 4.9-17 St LUKE Jesus said to his disciples: Whenever you go into a town where they make you welcome, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there and say, "The kingdom of God is very near you."

19 TUE Rm 8.31-39 Lk 9.38-45 St. Paul writes: I am certain of this: neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

20 WED Rm 10.5-13 Lk 9.46-50 Paul writes: There is no difference between persons: all have the same Lord, who generously blesses all who call on him.

21 THU Rm 11.29,33-36 Lk 9.57-62 Paul writes: God never revokes his gifts or his call.

22 FRI Rm 12.1-2 Lk 10.17-20 Do not model yourselves on the pattern of this world, but let yourselves be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may discern the will of God.

23 SAT Rm 12.3-13 Lk 10.21-24 Just as each of us has one body with many parts, and the parts do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, who are many, form one body, and each of us belongs to all the others.

24 SUN Mt 22.34-40 Ex 22.20-26 Jesus said: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. The second is similar: Love your neighbour as yourself.

25 MON Rm 12.14-21 Lk 10.29-37 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who are rejoicing, weep with those who weep.

26 TUE Rm 13.8-10 Lk 10.38-42 All the commandments can be summed up in this: Love your neighbour as yourself.

27 WED Rm 13.11-14 Lk 11.1-4 Paul writes: Let us put aside the deeds of darkness. Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ.

28 THU Ep 2.19-22 Lk 6.12-19 In Christ, you are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by the Spirit.

29 FRI Lk 11.9-13 Rm 14.13-19 Jesus said: Ask, and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.

30 SAT Rm 15.7-13 Lk 12.6-7,11-12 Accept one another just as Christ accepted you, for the glory of God.

31 SUN Mt 23.8-11 1 Th 2.7-13 Jesus said: The greatest among you will be your servant.

JOHANNINE HOURS

JEREMIAH 8,4-7

Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

How absurd to fall down and not get up, to take the wrong road and not turn back! No, Jeremiah is not scandalized by sin and wrongdoing. He knows the human heart too well. But he is unable to understand, and it pains him deeply, why people cling to error and misfortune as if it were a treasure. As if bewitched, they pursue an illusion, seeing the meaning of their life in something unreal. The horse that charges, here as elsewhere in the Bible (Ps 32,9; Is 30,16), is the symbol of a person who does not stop, even for a single moment, the headlong race of his life.

The war horse is a human invention, but migratory birds are a creation of God. Every creature finds fulfilment when it fills the role given it by God. Birds know this instinctively, but people learn the meaning of their life through a word from God, who leaves them free.

In order to achieve this freedom, much is not required of us. Simply not to be stubborn. God does not ask any creature something for which it is not made. Conversion is not viewed here as something extraordinary; it is natural to human beings, no more dramatic than the sparrow's return in the springtime. In God's eyes, people are made to turn from evil. Perhaps repentance, the attitude of turning to God at every moment, will even become a permanent state.

- What opportunities are there in our life to stop the race, to catch our breath, to check the direction in which we are heading?
- How can we live conversion of heart as a simple returning to that for which we were made?

Secondly, the young have a new attitude in another area: they are able not only to cross borders, but to feel at home in all sorts of cultures. This is a source of knowledge to which, a few decades ago, only a tiny elite had access. The young thus bear within themselves the construction of a world of solidarity, provided they do not let themselves be imprisoned in nationalistic claims, provided that they keep their hearts moving at the same speed as the train or the jet plane.

Simplifying

When I am in Taizé, I see a third dimension clearly. It is the capacity of the young to simplify their daily life. Today, a simplification is necessary if we are to survive on this planet together. This simplification can begin with young people. If they are deeply rooted in the faith, then simplicity will not merely be an intellectual exercise but an attitude that comes from the heart and that transforms life by giving it true joy. And this joy will be the leaven in the dough that is taking shape.

Today a Christian spiritual renewal must go to the very roots of the faith; it must be a life-force springing up in that living heart which is the Church. The richness of the time of the Holy Spirit in which we are living is that it keeps us from reducing our understanding of what is at stake in this time of transition to a dimension which would not do justice to human beings in their originality and their unique character.

It is good that everywhere, young people are influencing this transformation necessary to create a more human society and they are discussing it in groups.

Echos from the continents

The Philippines

The essence of our education

Tenten from Manila, recently in Taizé for three months and now back in the Philippines, writes about a commitment she and others have undertaken with young people of a slum area:

"Our group started as a prayer group in one of the student organizations in my university in Manila. We all had this question in common: what is the essence of our education?

It was during that time that two of our group brought us once to Smokey Mountain just to see the place. Smokey Mountain is a mountain of garbage within the city, a dumping site for the garbage of Manila. There were 3000 families living there at that time, making a living by scavenging in the garbage. We visited the place one Sunday morning to attend the mass with other interested students. After a while we found ourselves starting to go there regularly, every Sunday. There was no definite work for us but we did what could be done, helping in the feeding program, visiting some families...Later we were asked to help start a day-care program for the children — since we were studying at a teachers training college — and then to assist the young people to help them prepare for entrance exams to college.

When the time came for a part of our group to graduate, we decided to continue our involvement in Smokey Mountain and start a young professionals' group. It took time to formalize the group. We are not rich, some are the eldest in their families and this means that we carry a lot of responsability for them. After university, our families are now expecting us to support them.

Young professionals are caught, asking to choose between two beautiful things: either find work and help their families or else try to help others, which means making little money. Many have to choose between their family and others. It's very painful. In our group we want to encourage one another: you can serve your family and at the same time do what you want to help others. We believe that God is telling us something because after seven years, our group is still intact and still as enthusiastic as before!

Now we see more clearly the connections between Smokey Mountain and what is happening in our society and in the world. We are trying to encourage again this feeling that we are all responsible not only for ourselves but for others and for the society, that our faith is integrated with our work, and that our work is integrated with our family. These are important values in the Philippines. But because of so much poverty and so much injustice in our society, some people can't this clearly anymore. We need to take care of these values and deepen them."

USA

Bridges of communion

It was one year ago, in May 1992, that a North American meeting took place in Dayton. Young Americans of very different origins and backgrounds took part. From Atlanta, for example, a group of Hispanic and English-speaking young people had made the journey together all the way to Dayton. A year later, they write from Atlanta:

"In Dayton we built bridges of communion across cultures that live very separately in the U.S. and we have continued this through friendship and prayers here in Atlanta.

Recently we gathered for a small pilgrimage in the Atlanta area. As we shared our commitments it became clear that in a city faced with large numbers of homeless people and increasing numbers of undocumented immigrants, there are many signs of hope. We saw a number of them:

Some young people volunteer at Samaritan House, a place that works closely with homeless people searching for jobs. These young people provide simple but essential things needed for a

7 → job search: showers, clothes for an interview, a telephone answering service, an address. They help give the people confidence and plan their search.

Other young people are involved in initiatives such as Cafe 458, which is a small restaurant for homeless people who are offered a menu with choices of what to eat. Volunteers take their orders and they are offered counseling, medical and legal services and an alcohol and drug recovery program. The cafe offers hospitality and dignity through its special spirit."

East Asia

A resource of solidarity

Some excerpts from a letter, after several months spent making visits in East Asia, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea:

Since Easter, through many visits and meetings in several countries of Asia, we have been celebrating the resurrection in joy, as if it were a single day. And yet daily life is not always easy, and at times dark clouds appear on the horizon. Some people here are worried that a too rapid development is destroying essential values. For the Chinese of Hong Kong, the perspective of a return to China in 1997 can be unsettling. Young people are reflecting on the question from the letter "Awaken to a Joy": "Will we be among those who extend the fine hope of a new future for the human family?"

In Japan and in Korea, we have just had a pilgrimage of trust to prepare young people for this new future. First of all, there were three weekends in Japan, in Osaka, Sendai and Tokyo. In Tokyo, members of the Anglican Church where we were welcomed did not recognize their own place of worship: in the heart of the city, a beautiful space of silence and meditation had been created. Through sharing with them, we realized that joy is not an easy topic: one young man, who had recently arrived in Tokyo to work there, told how much of a challenge it was to live out joy in the rigidity of a large corporation. Saturday afternoon, everyone set out to make visits.

After a reading from the Acts of the Apostles, humble visits took on a deep meaning. Just as the first Christians confirmed one another in faith, these visits enabled us to discover signs of hope, signs of resurrection. Some went to help clean a restaurant where homeless people are welcomed, others spent an hour with elderly persons. We visited a family whose 20 year old son has been handicapped from birth.

In very difficult material conditions on account of the smallness of the apartment, a real network of solidarity has sprung up to ensure a continuous presence with him. The witness of this young man and those who accompany him, family and neighbours, helped us understand how creative forces can spring up even from a great trial.

The pilgrimage of this Easter season began in Nagasaki with a prayer in the shrine of the martyrs of the seventeenth century. Leaving the train station, the first thing we saw was, on the church, the words: Laudate Dominum, omnes gentes. Inside, in Japanese characters was written "God is love." These words, the last spoken by the young martyrs to whom the church is dedicated, remained with us as we went to spend some time in silence in the peace park in Hiroshima. There, everything recalls the horror of the atomic bomb on August 6, 1945.

Then the visits continued in Korea, where the situation of Christians is completely different. Young people, aware of the dangers of a too rapid development that can destroy essential values, have chosen a simple life-style that goes against the mainstream. They were happy to have a few days of reflection to catch their breath, to discover once again that "joy and peace are vital values for all who want to live lives rooted in Christ."

A young minister and his wife have chosen to live with the farmers. The homes of these people are so far apart that they have to organize a system to collect people so that all who wish to can attend the worship. A meeting was held in the major seminary on the theme of selflessness and generosity in pastoral work.

South Africa

The struggle for peace and reconciliation

A young man who spent several months in Taizé and who is now back in his country, writes to us:

"Our recent prayer and discussion meeting in Johannesburg was centred on the theme «sources of hope.» Some young people and adults from Soweto, Benoni, Tembisa and Rustenburg came together to pray and discover how each of them in their local communities can become a bearer of trust and reconciliation. After recent political events, violence has swept the whole country. The situation has become more tense than before and as a result, many people are marked by uncertainty and are hopeless about the future.

Such a gathering, a prayer meeting, was very important for both blacks and whites. A short meditation was given based on the story of Mary Magdalene at the empty tomb (John 20: 11-18) followed by small group discussions. The optimism in the small groups was amazing. Everyone was open, shared their own experience on hope, especially hope in Christ, and committed themselves to be bearers of hope in their own locality. One woman said how she would go back home to start to learn Zulu and find someone who could teach interested parishioners, as a way of building bridges among different races in the country.

We hope to prepare more prayer meetings in different regions of South Africa. We sense the need for young people to struggle for peace and reconciliation through non-violence."

Letter from Taizé

Annual subscription

Ordinary subscription: 40 FF (France 30 FF)
Supporting subscription: 75 or 150 FF
Airmail subscription (outside Europe only): 50 FF

means of payment:

• by **credit card** (*Visa, Mastercard, Eurocard, Carte Bleue*): send the number of your card and dates of validity to Taizé, and say what sum in French Francs you wish to transfer.

• by **international Giro transfer** in French Francs addressed to: *Lettre de Taizé*, CCP 20041-01007-0061446M038-71 or CCP LYON 614 46 M.

• by **cheque** in French Francs to *Lettre de Taizé*, F-71250 Taizé Communauté made payable through *Société Générale* (Eurocheques in French Francs accepted).

• In the following countries it is possible to pay the subscription within the country: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, India, Ireland, Italy, Korea, Netherlands, New Zealand Norway, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, UK and USA write to Taizé to ask for the address in your country.

Correspondence: Letter from Taizé,
71250 Taizé-Communauté, France

Lettre 171 - DRA Comm. de Taizé - Com. par. 50795 - DL 783
Ateliers et Presses de Taizé